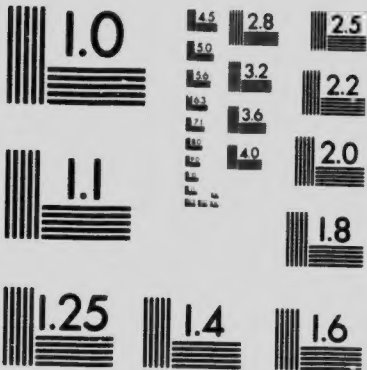




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Education for the Improvement of Rural Conditions

An Address at Charlottetown, P.E.I., Saturday, 20th July, 1907

By Dr. James W. Robertson

Principal of Macdonald College

St. Anne de Bellevue

Que.

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Education for the Improvement of Rural Conditions

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

This beautiful Island is a place so charming in the open that I think you people in this hall have kindly sacrificed your comfort for the sake of paying me a compliment which I did not merit. When I come to the Island I find myself among friends whom I like, and who do me the kindness of liking me. It is very gracious on your part and very complimentary to me that you should have arranged a meeting at which I might say some things to the people in Charlottetown regarding the educational movement, in order that I might still further be able to co-operate with you. I am to speak to you on the subject of education for the improvement of rural conditions on the Island. The conditions of rural life on this Island are much the same as those of rural life elsewhere, but you have also problems peculiar to yourselves. These can be solved only by yourselves. Everybody has his own problems in life, and just so far as he solves these problems wisely, that is to say, with real benefit to others and himself, just so far is he successful.

What are some of the problems down here that may be peculiar to you as a people? There are problems due to your youth. You are young people; you have not much history in length. You have considerable history in depth; but your historical story is but brief. Youth has those fine qualities that belong to unsullied life and all those handicaps that accompany inexperience. You use forcible language in your descriptions of each other. Strong adjectives and plenty of superlatives are characteristic of the speech of youth. You will recover from that by-and-by. You have the problems arising out of your size. You occupy a comparatively small Province and are a few people. Canada is a very large country. Her immense area gives the people of Canada

many troublesome and difficult problems as a nation. Yours is a reasonably small country, a country within easy grasp of one's mind in regard to its extent and resources. These conditions make you sometimes forget that other parts of Canada have vast and valuable natural resources that also require development.

BEST CHANCE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS.

Because you are a comparatively small and compact community, you have the best chance of any to solve the problems of education for rural life speedily and successfully for yourselves. Think of the troubles of the inland parts of Canada with that extraordinary flow of foreign blood into our citizenship of peoples who have ideas and ideals different from ours; whose standards of life are lower than ours. You are a compact people of one blood, nearly all of one language, largely of similar aspirations, and the best thing you can do is to give the children so much better education and opportunities that you will set the pace and the example of advanced and higher civilization in rural districts for all of Canada.

Some of the problems of life for you are more difficult because you are very rich. Of all the people who have liberty and self-government, you are the people who have more money and more real wealth per head of population than any other civilized community, in proportion to the amount you spend on your schools. There are no other people who have so many dollars to their credit for every dollar they invest "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

THE MEANS OF ALL GOOD.

"The love of money is the root of all evil," and the love of children is the means of all good. Put these two in opposition and see which prevails with you, which pulls you its way, when settling the amounts to be spent on education. Throughout the history of the past, those people have striven best for the improvement of rural conditions, who have had the greatest love of children. By making the most of this life in that way you will be making the most for the next life also, for "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." The verities of what any people have done or been is summed up in the children and their opportunities. The supreme test of human progress is the quality of child-life and its opportunities for

wholesome development, happiness, and satisfactions. That is why I speak earnestly this afternoon on the importance of improving the conditions of rural life, that the children may be intelligent, capable, industrious, and full of good will.

BURIAL BEFORE DEATH.

In not a few instances unworthy motives impel parents to seek education as such for their children. Perhaps one of the most powerful of these is that education may deliver the boy from the need of working hard—give him a chance to escape hard labor. Any parent or any child who seeks education for that reason finds it a disappointment, a delusion and a snare—both as means and an end.

To seek to escape one's share of toil in life is really to waste one's powers, to wrap one's talents in the napkins or cerements of the tomb. It is burial before death. One purpose of education should be to develop the powers and train them into fitness for application to real, exhausting, telling hard work. One of the mischievous notions abroad is that the necessity for labor somehow was the consequence of man's fall; that as a punishment Adam was doomed to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. No greater misfortune could befall a people than a general belief that labor is to be shunned, to be evaded, or to be looked down upon as a disgrace. I mean manual labor quite as much as intellectual toil. Conditions of rural life should be made so attractive that the boys will be impelled to work for sheer love of doing things, for the exhilaration and delight that come through the labor that increases "mastery for service."

Others seek education in the hope of finding a more genteel occupation than that of their fathers—something more genteel than farming. That habit of thought or motive regarding education should be corrected. The school should teach the children that there is no more satisfying and honorable calling than agriculture. But I would not stunt their ambition or benumb their powers by keeping them from knowing. Rather would I nourish them worthily by letting them learn that the real satisfying joys of life come from doing work with the hands and the mind and the spirit, indeed with the whole nature for the uplifting of the people of the locality.

TO LABOR IS TO PRAY.

The worthy motives for seeking education are that the children might thereby be fitted for making the most of life itself and of the conditions of their own homes and locality. Education is needed by each individual as such to increase his capacity for happiness, and to enlarge the means of securing that; also to develop his power of service as a citizen, as one of the community, for "no man liveth unto himself." Education is also the birthright of every boy and girl as units in the eternal procession of the race out of the depths and the degradations of animalism, up to the best that men and women can be. And let us not forget that labor, intelligent, kindly co-operative labor is a great means towards that goal. Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, remembering that to labor is to pray.

NOT DANGEROUS.

I know people have said, "Don't teach the people, because a little knowledge is a dangerous thing." That is one of the fallacies which runs well because it sounds well. A little knowledge is not a dangerous thing; otherwise it would be better to remain ignorant and be in bliss. Think of the great Newton who knew he did not know much. He said of himself that he was only as a child playing on the beach and getting a pebble of truth here and there. Even the scholarly Lord Acton, the authority on history, could not know much compared with all that is knowable. A little stupidity and a little or a great deal of selfishness are very dangerous when joined to a little or a large amount of knowledge. I do not blame the school for not endeavoring to impart enough knowledge of some sort. Its mistake is that the effort to impart knowledge has been so great that little time or place or power has been left to train into ability for the affairs of common every-day life, and into good behavior and all manner of neighborhood good-wills and co-operations.

TRAINING INTO ABILITY.

A school should not be so much a place for merely imparting information about the past and the distant, as a place for training the child into ability to make the best of

local conditions and towards the development of good, unselfish character. I say nothing against the study of Greek or Greek History or Greek civilization for culture, but if these attempt to usurp the place of the study of conditions of Prince Edward Island, and of subjects which could do more for its development and the uplift of its people, then "Let the dead bury its dead." Our duty and privilege are to learn all we can from the past, and to uphold education suited for making life useful and thereby joyous and happy for the present. We need more than an occasional look at the past for guidance, but the man who keeps his face to the past stumbles and leads others astray.

The school is to be a place where there will be more time for training and less need for telling. Those who like Latin so well, and it is a good subject for training the language faculties into exact, precise, and sometimes beautiful expression, should also remember its limitations. The perennial disputes regarding its pronunciation, which is so different in different schools, might be ended by substituting standardized phonographs for the living teachers. They would then have the further solace of a coveted uniformity which would be truly mechanical.

The school to be vital must be a place where children are trained into knowledge and ability to manage rural conditions and life here and now, and not merely to know of the conditions and ideals of a long dead past. Let us learn to think and live and labor for the future of our children who are here now. The school garden is a means of training, inspiring, and nourishing the power of children into ability. That is why I commend the benefits of school gardens. They are becoming a means of education that will very soon prevail in the schools of all Canada.

SYMPATHETIC TEACHERS.

We need teachers who are in sympathy with rural life. How often I have seen teachers so intent upon having children pass examinations on formal subjects that they did not know anything of the locality or of the people in it. The teacher needs to be in sympathy with the people and to have a knowledge of their conditions.

Teachers need those qualifications for effective leadership, leadership in the school's campaign against ignorance and vice and selfishness and disease, and all ill-wills howsoever

begotten. They require scholarship in the subjects and questions vital to the people of the locality. They should be close to them in sympathy and in the character of their intelligence, although in advance as to extent and range of it. Perhaps you remember how one of my American friends characterized a would-be leader who was out of sympathy with his longed-for but not labored-for followers. "He was so high up in his own esteem that he had an enthusiastic following of only his own atmosphere." There is need for teachers being close to the people, that they may lead the people up and on through the children, and otherwise also. The kind of teachers we require are those who are born into sympathy with the people's needs and trained into ability to meet them.

NOBILITY OF TEACHING.

What hinders those who might be teachers from going into this profession, peerless in its opportunities for good? Want of public appreciation of the profession. A Southern woman speaking of her family, when asked how many children she had, said: "I had three, but only one is living, another is dead, and the third is teaching school." Happily there is a splendid recovery from that attitude regarding the school teacher, which is seldom so bluntly expressed. The attitude of the taxpayers of Canada towards teachers makes one wonder whether they count their service really vital to the well-being of the nation.

The want of public appreciation of the nobility of the occupation of the woman or man who teaches school—that is a definite hindrance to the improvement of the schools, and to the choice of teaching as a profession when a young woman or man is considering what they will do.

The next drawback, which really comes from the low appreciation of the value of the teachers' work, is the small remuneration paid to them. The labor and self-denial of teaching, if applied to other occupations, would receive in them much larger compensation in money than when put into "keeping school." People say, "Oh, well, schools cost a great deal, even with the small salaries paid to teachers now." What of that? In so far as I save the seed to that extent do I make it impossible to reap the harvest. Instruction and training in youth are the means of bringing abundant harvests of national wealth as well as of some better fruits.

STARVE THE SCHOOLS, STARVE THE PEOPLE.

If the people will starve the schools the schools may retaliate by letting the people starve, mentally, then morally, and in a measure materially also. Once I saw a field, of which the owner, a wise man, said: "I let the crop take care of itself; and in three years there were only two small heads of wheat among the weeds." Sir John B. Lawes further expressed to me at the same time the opinion that if the plants which furnish human food should be all left without human care and culture for fourteen years, there would be hardly any of the cultivated plants fit for food. For even the bare maintenance of human life there is need for practical education; and for the maintenance of all our institutions and means of culture, there is need for practical education.

What better use can be made of money than to keep up good schools? Taxation among a free people is everybody chipping in to do what no one could do alone, but which all can do together with great benefit to each. Such taxation increases the value of property; and more than that, it enlarges the capacity of the people to manage and to enjoy life. It is just as essential in the long run that the people should support the schools willingly as that their children should attend them.

SALARIES MUST GO UP.

Salaries for teachers will have to go up or the people will go down. I do not see any escape from that conclusion. It is well that there is none, because there is no better investment for wealth or public taxes than to pay somebody for doing the best work for the nation's most precious assets, its children and its schools. Many capable men are not attracted to teach because the profession has so few prizes. The bank has a good many managers; a youth may hope to become one. In commerce he may win a prize, but the prizes for the ordinary school teacher are few, and are not large. There are not many positions in the whole educational sphere where the salary more than yields a bare living. It would be a good thing to pay some of your best men, good, attractive, alluring salaries, to induce young men to go into this profession.

COURSE OF STUDY.

The school is only one of the institutions and agencies for formal education. It should not confine itself to the use of books for developing intelligence, training into ability, and bringing out unselfishness. The book is a capital agent with its words as the symbols of the ideas. It is suited particularly for those who are reaching maturity and are able to drink in ideas from the abstract and profit by them for after life. For the child, one of the best means is to guide him in doing things with his hands on tangible things, during part of the time.

I count myself among those who think that the school of the future will have a course of study providing for the development of the mind, body, and spirit symmetrically, and therefore suited to the ages and powers of the children. Probably one-quarter of the time will be devoted to doing things with the hands with tangible things, including all forms of manual training, physical exercise, games, and physical culture; one-quarter to languages, particularly one's mother tongue, history, literature, songs, and pictures; another quarter to arithmetic and mathematics, the twin science of numbers and quantity; and the remainder of the time to sciences which embrace the study of natural surroundings, of animals, plants, and minerals, of the weather, of the earth as a whole, and of physical forces and phenomena. To be effective, the whole course must necessarily be administered in such a way as to develop a fine sense of proportion and a keen sense of responsibility. That, in general, would be the frame work for courses of work and study for schools leading towards the improvement of conditions for rural and city life.

Manual training and household science and school gardens were not put in the school courses to satisfy women's councils or clubs, but to improve the schools fundamentally for the children and to provide for the preparation of teachers with new qualifications. The whole child goes to school—body, mind, and spirit—and the training of hand, head, and heart should go on harmoniously. We use these terms for convenience of explanation, but the child is one and indivisible. The training of these are means to develop his whole nature into ability, intelligence, and good will for co-operation with his fellows. Those are vital to happiness, to satisfactions in life.

They make for homes becoming more loveable, wholesome places to dwell in. They form tastes and standards which tend towards conserving and developing the love of labor, the love of ideas, the love of truth, and the love of one's fellows.

The kind of a school I would like to see for rural life is one that spells ability, intelligence, and good will: For the body—power and skill; for the mind—grasp of truth and insight; and for the spirit—"Peace on earth, good will to men."

THE SIMPLE LIFE.

At the Macdonald College at St. Anne's last winter, there were 250 hens living in colony houses, one board thick, with the thermometer occasionally 17 degrees below zero inside. When the water was frozen a man would shovel in snow or the hens would run out and pick it. They were fed on dry grain once a day, and were not given any hot mash. They had to scratch for a living. About the middle of November they began laying eggs and laid over 10,000 eggs by the end of March. One of our neighbors, a wealthy man, heats his hen-houses with fuel. He had about 200 hens, which were fed with bran, hot mash, flavored, and perhaps perfumed. Nevertheless, those hens did not lay enough to supply his town house, which used seven dozens a week. His man came to our place regularly and bought from us the seven dozens of eggs, for which we charged him sixty cents per dozen. Our hens were educated hens, living by labor, under naturally rigorous conditions.

This illustration shows that unless the creature labors under simple conditions of life, with plenty of fresh air and wholesome food, it is not as productive as it might otherwise be. In our schools we must conserve the love of labor and ability to labor with the hands for the sake of the vitality of the race. We must conserve a love of truth. The less time we consume in merely imparting information in the schools about the dead past, the more time we shall have for training into ability for the application of intelligent labor for the improvement of the conditions of the present. There is a living past as well as a dead past. We must see that we bring into our schools the vital parts and leave the husks and mummies and fossils where they belong.

RESULTS OF ORGANIZED EFFORT.

When I began to advocate for the people of Ontario, education as a means of improving the rural conditions for dairying, the exports of dairy products from all Canada amounted to seven and a-half million dollars. Then an organized effort was made to advance dairy education by doing things. As a result there were better labor, more knowledge, and more co-operation. Last year the exports amounted to \$30,000,000. The land became richer, more beautiful, less weedy, and more productive, and the people became more capable and co-operative.

In this Province manual training as a branch of education was introduced by means of money provided by Sir William C. Macdonald. It trains the hand and eye to accuracy. I saw in the Prince of Wales College to-day specimens of work by Island students that I have never seen equalled in Canada, considering the length of time they have been under instruction. I saw to-day some of the best examples of drawing which I have ever examined. Last year 20,000 children in Canada were taking manual training as a result of the Macdonald Movement. Out of this grew the Macdonald Seed Grain Competition. First \$100 was given for prizes, then Sir William Macdonald gave \$10,000.

The \$10,000 went into the pockets of the children on Canadian farms, but the spirit that grew out of that effort goes on forever. A young man named George H. Clark was employed to manage the seed grain competition in order to encourage the selections of the largest heads of wheat and oat, and thus secure the largest plump grains for seed. This movement led to the establishment of the Seed Division of the Department of Agriculture, and the appointment of Mr. Clark as the Seed Commissioner of Canada, and the voting of \$50,000 a year to carry on the work of seed improvement and the securing of reasonably clean grass and clover seeds. It has been estimated that the value of the crops in 1906, of those who were directly affected by the seed grain prizes, was increased \$500,000 in consequence. The obtaining of such a profit on the original investment of \$10,000 is certainly high finance.

In the Northwest, with all its chances to grow grain, there was such carelessness in seed selection that seven years ago there were only about 350 acres of pure Red Fife wheat in

the whole of that vast territory. In 1906 there were 34,000 acres of reasonably pure Red Fife, and the time may not be far distant when the whole land may be seeded down with pure seed.

Over at the Hillsboro School you have the first example of a beginning to select and grow the clover seed from your own fields. Hereafter you will be able to use the pure seed from your fields instead of the sweepings and cleanings of the warehouses of Ontario; for such had been traced to the Island.

The improvement in the potato crop, as a result of spraying, is illustrated in the school gardens, where the sprayed plants yielded from 110 per cent. to 31 per cent. more than the unsprayed.

THE MACDONALD CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL.

Why did the Consolidated School come to Prince Edward Island, and why was an addition made to the Prince of Wales College by the generosity of Sir William Macdonald? These were not doled out as charities. As such they would have been an offence to an independent, capable people. Below the money lay the desire and purpose to help the people to give the children a better chance, to make the Island a better place to live in. The Consolidated School is not only a place where manual training and household science and nature study are taught, but a place where people might see for themselves what such a school can do for their children. The Hillsboro Consolidated School has had a most prosperous career in training the children, even in two years.

By its example school gardens and gardens at home had been established that would not otherwise have been. As Sir Louis Davies said, the Hillsboro School had not merely a Provincial and a Dominion reputation, but it was known over the continent. I have had enquiries from England concerning this school, and Dr. Anderson has borne testimony to the excellent character of the teaching.

Mr. Jones, the Principal, has decided to leave the school. Someone said to me, "What was the trouble between you and Mr. Jones?" There was no quarrel between Mr. Jones and me, none between Mr. Jones and the School Board. He is resigning in order that he may further advance his education along agricultural lines. He has resigned to the great regret of the Board and myself. I shall be glad to follow Mr. Jones'

career with interest and appreciation. To-day the Board appointed as his successor Mr. H. B. McLean, the Vice-Principal, who has had two years' experience in this school, and the work will go on with unimpaired efficiency.

PRINCE OF WALES COLLEGE AND ITS RELATION TO THE MACDONALD MOVEMENT.

You will expect me to speak of the enlargement of the Prince of Wales College, and its relation to the Macdonald Movement. You have an illustration at Hillsboro of a good school, a school virtually in the new, less than three years old, feeling its way in adjustments and improvements. If no provision is made for training teachers to carry on such work as is done in that school, the movement would naturally suffer. The Prince of Wales College has trained students who have been eminently successful in mathematics, classics, languages, and sciences. All of that is worth a great deal to them, and through them to others afterwards. The main use of the College is to train leaders among your own people in all lines of needed Provincial activity; ministers, doctors, lawyers, certainly, but also leaders of rural life, trained to meet and cope with conditions of rural life. Someone may say, "Does not that require an agricultural college on the Island?" I do not think so yet. Suppose this Province decided to establish an agricultural college of its own, for the purpose of giving an advanced course in agriculture, what is the best you could do? You could put half a million dollars into buildings, farms, and equipment. That is not a great deal of money, but you might have some trouble finding enough money on the Island for that purpose. You would need a staff of professors, capable, strong, inspiring, enthusiastic. You would need a household science department with the best possible equipment and thoroughly trained instructors. Suppose you had the college founded, and your staff of twenty trained specialists engaged, you would likely have students from the Island only. There would be no broadening of the students by contact with the influences of students from all over the Dominion. You might have perhaps 25 students doing advanced work. I think there is for you a more excellent way.

THE PRINCE OF WALES COLLEGE.

The Prince of Wales College is the best college for your needs. On the other hand, if a boy wishes to take a course in civil engineering or medicine or law, for a reasonable fee he can secure the benefits of the \$5,000,000 invested at McGill University. If he wishes to take the advanced course in agriculture, he can come to Macdonald College, and get the benefit of \$1,500,000 invested in buildings, equipment, and farms, with some thirty of the best instructors we can employ. The girls can obtain equal advantages in the School of Household Science of Macdonald College. The only charge will be for room and board, which has been placed at \$3.25 per week, plus a small laboratory fee of \$5 for the whole year. It will be sensible and economical and wise, to devote Prince of Wales College to training teachers for your elementary schools, and imparting good secondary education to those who pass from school directly into other occupations on the Island.

The Prince of Wales College will serve you best by doing things you need to have done, that other people cannot do for you. Make this college the best place in Canada for training your leaders for rural and town schools, and giving others, who intend to take an advanced college course, such educational preparation as they need.

I have gone over the building to-day with Mr. Cundall, to whom Sir William and I are personally indebted for relieving us of much care and anxiety regarding the management of the business connected with the enlargement. Mr. Cundall is one of the most precise and capable business men in the country. We esteem him as a sterling man, sterling all the way through. I inspected the building, and you know it is the duty of the inspector to find fault where defects exist, and I found that the workmanship and materials were honest, substantial, apparently durable, and beautiful. When the work is finished you will have a college building which will be highly creditable to the Province.

I would ask you to uphold the hands of Principal Robertson and his enthusiastic, sympathetic, and capable staff. I hope the Prince of Wales College will continue to do work as good as any it has done. It has the reputation in Montreal of sending up to McGill some of the best qualified men. Because of the enlargements for the better equipment and training of teachers, there is no reason why the good work in mathematics and classics should cease, or why it should not continue to send to McGill men of brilliant attainments.

THE JENNIE ROBERTSON SCHOLARSHIPS.

I refer again for a moment to the school for teachers at the new Macdonald College. We are about to arrange for a special class of 40 teachers who have taught at least two years, and who will undertake to teach at least one year on their return from the Macdonald College to the Province from which they come. As already announced they will receive free tuition. In addition to the cost of their room and board for one session of eight or nine months, a sum for travelling expenses will be provided by the Jennie Robertson Scholarships offered by my wife. For a time forty teachers from Canada, including five from Prince Edward Island, will each year receive the benefits of these scholarships.

KEEP YOUR BEST TEACHERS AT HOME.

The improvements in the Prince of Wales College will give opportunities for a better training of teachers to improve rural conditions. It demands on your part greater financial and sympathetic support. This education will cost more than the schools in the past have cost, but it will be a case of paying more for the better article, and obtaining better value for your money.

You call your Island "God's own country." Your people take pride in your ancestry. You are descended from men of spirit who dared to do hard things and costly things for their children and for their localities. Are you not ashamed to let the best teachers you have be lured into servitude to other Provinces? Some localities would rather spare fine teachers than pay \$100 or \$200 a year more. Would you tamely submit to have your homes raided of what you prize the most? Will you allow the Northwest to raid your country and capture your best teachers, for the sake of \$200 a year each? Will you let them pull your best leaders out only to let you keep back \$200 of your "dirty" money—for no money is clean that a man keeps at the expense of his children's opportunities? Stand up for provincial rights, for the rights of your children, for the rights of the young who cannot defend themselves, for the rights of the children to be trained by the best of your own people well paid for that service.

Let your ambition be not to be merely leaders in dairying and agriculture, but leaders in education. Show your magnificent statesmanship, even if you have to pay salaries to beat British Columbia and Manitoba, and improvement of rural conditions will surely follow.

MONEY WELL INVESTED.

These improvements for education will cost money. If \$5.00 per farm will do a little and not succeed, how much will you put in if you have the money?

If I were a general in charge of an army and it came to costing 10,000 men and winning, as against 1,000 men and losing, I would throw the 10,000 in and go with them.

Ignorances, inabilities, and want of good-wills all come from lack of education or from poor schools. These are the most costly of all the fixed charges upon property and human life.

It was estimated that the improvements to the Prince of Wales College would cost \$20,000. I told Sir William that that would be money well invested. Afterwards, when it was found that \$55,000 would be necessary to meet the situation, he believed it would be money well invested, well invested for the children of his native Province; and he sent the full amount with all good-will.

The Macdonald College at Ste. Anne de Bellevue is a further expression of the same conviction regarding the children and the future of Canada. It has cost a great deal, and will cost a great deal to maintain. Sir William has provided an endowment of more than two millions of dollars. It will be a permanent headquarters for this better education, for the improvement of rural conditions and for the building up of the country by advancing and developing the intelligence, ability, and good-wills of its youth. It will doubtless cost the lives of many men and women who will joyously wear themselves out in its service. It will give them fine opportunities for losing their lives as seed grain is lost into the tilled fields in Spring. "He that loseth his life shall save it." And if more money were available, when more tillage has been done, I would have no more hesitation in putting it and more men and more women into Macdonald College than I would have in putting in seed on well-tilled land for the sake of the harvest.

SIR WILLIAM'S MESSAGE.

I leave you Sir William's thought of you, and venture to join him in the expression of it, "We like you, we wish you well and ever rejoice when we hear of your happiness and prosperity."